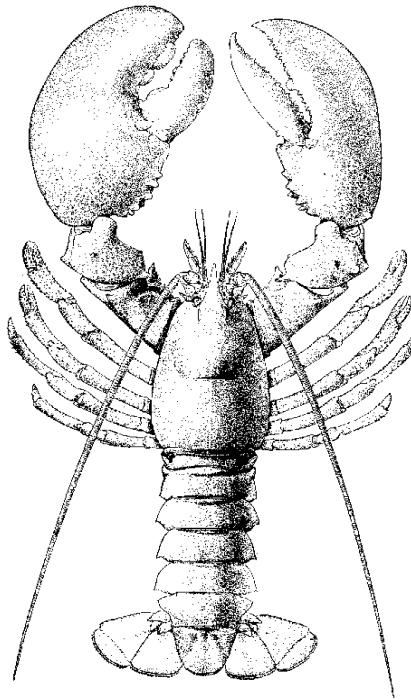


PRESS GUIDE



Proposal for American Lobster Fishery Management in Federal Water



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PRESS GUIDE

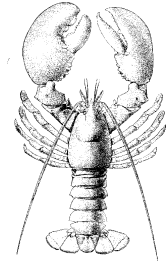
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DATES

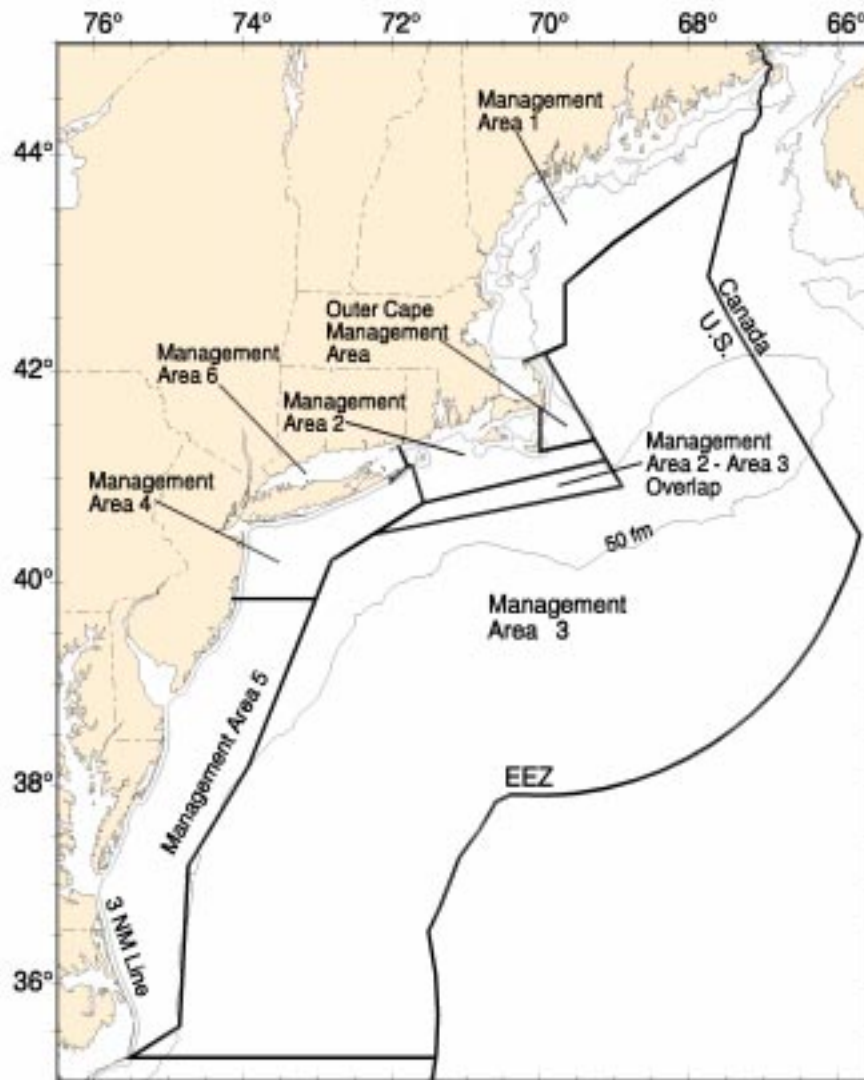
This proposal is open for public comment for 30 days after publication
in the Federal Register.

Final rules should be in place by the end of June, 1999



GOAL

To bring federal permit holders into the coastwide effort to stop overfishing of the American lobster and rebuild the egg production in the stocks to a level supporting a sustainable fishery within 10 years.



LOBSTER MANAGEMENT AREAS

Areas 1, 2, 4, 5, and Outer Cape Cod are nearshore areas that contain both interstate waters (0-3 miles from shore) and some federal waters (in most cases, between 0 and approximately 30 miles of shore). Area 6 is entirely state waters of Long Island Sound. Area 3 is entirely federal water.

PROPOSED PLAN SUMMARY

In all areas: continue all other existing federal measures (eliminating the present marking requirement, if replaced by trap tags as proposed), including the trip limit for non-trap landings and the moratorium on new entry.

Transfers management authority for federal waters from the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA) to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA)

This increases the states' responsibility for lobster management while retaining NOAA Fisheries' responsibility for federal permit holders and complementary measures for federal waters.

It requires NOAA Fisheries and the lobster industry to work through the Commission, rather than a regional fishery management council, to devise measures for ending overfishing and rebuilding egg production.

Measures for federal waters still must meet the national standards for fishery management plans specified in the MSFCMA.

What's New Under the Proposals for Federal Lobster Trap Gear Permit Holders to Complement Interstate Management Measures

1. Declaration exclusively into nearshore area(s), or into the offshore area, for the duration of the rebuilding period.
2. In nearshore areas, fish no more than 1000 pots in 1999 and 800 pots in 2000
3. In the offshore area, fish no more than 2000 pots in 1999 and 1800 pots in 2000
4. In Area 1, retain no lobsters larger than 5" carapace length
5. Increase by 1/16" the size of escape vents (from 1-14/16" x 5-3/4" to 1-15/16" x 5-3/4")
6. Purchase and use on each trap one trap tag (replaces present gear marking requirements)
7. Carry federal fishery observer if requested
8. Abide by maximum trap size restrictions
9. May develop & participate in approved experimental fisheries
10. Work with the Commission, rather than a regional fishery management council, to recommend and advise on future plan development and adjustment

Current Interstate Management Plan Measures Incorporated

1. Acknowledges Commission's primary responsibility for lobster management
2. Accepts the Interstate plan's egg rebuilding schedule as the management goal
3. Accepts the management areas as designated.
4. Accepts trap caps/reduction schedules for Areas 1, 2, and Outer Cape Cod
5. Requires the same maximum trap size limits
6. Requires the same escape vent increase
7. Requires the same maximum legal lobster size for Area 1 (5")
8. Endorses the "adaptive management", and using area-based industry advisory teams
9. Accepts the same deferral on additional mandatory reporting, anticipating a coastwide cooperative statistics program under development through the Commission.

Measures in Addition to Those Included in Interstate Plan

1. Restricts transfers of effort by federal permit holders between near- and offshore
2. Establishes trap caps for federal permit holders in years 1999/2000 in Areas 4 & 5 (1000/800)
3. Establishes trap cap for federal permit holders year 2000 in Area 3 (1800)
4. Retains federal permit moratorium on new entry in all areas
5. Implements mandatory trap tagging for federal permit holders in all areas
6. NOAA Fisheries will implement any additional measures, or changes in measures, in federal waters required to meet the Interstate Plan's egg rebuilding schedule.

Measures for Non-Trap, Recreational, and Charter/Party

Those who use bottom trawls or dredges can presently retain 100 lobsters per day-at-sea, and no more than 500 per trip, regardless of trip length. No additional requirements are proposed for them, except that they must abide by the 5" maximum legal size if fishing in Area 1.

Possession limits for charter/party and recreational vessels are also unchanged, with the same exception that they must abide by the 5" maximum legal size if fishing in Area 1.

How The Plan Can Be Modified

Will work within the Commission process to develop measures and plan adjustments, including conservation equivalent alternatives, throughout the rebuilding period. Will promulgate, as necessary, measures to complement the interstate plan, and meet plan objectives.

Within the Commission process, the industry is represented via participation on seven lobster conservation management teams, one for each Area designated in the plan. These teams have met since the Interstate Plan was approved and several have submitted alternative measures for consideration.

A peer-reviewed assessment has been scheduled in 1999 by the ASMFC to review the status of lobster populations. This will help determine the extent to which current and proposed management measures will achieve the plan objectives.

Where to Obtain the Proposed Rule After Publication

http://www.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html

or

<http://www.wh.who.edu/ro/doc/nero.html>

Call or write to:

Bob Ross

NOAA/NMFS/NERO

1 Blackburn Drive

Gloucester, MA 01930

(978)281-9234

QUICK BACKGROUND FACTS

American lobster occur in U.S. waters in three stocks distributed from Maine to North Carolina, inshore and offshore, in waters managed by individual states, among states through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and by NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency responsible for achieving sustainable fisheries in the nation's waters.

1997 Federal Lobster Vessel Permit Holders by Gear

Trap	2674
Bottom Trawl	575
Dredges	90
Total	3431

1997 Federal Lobster Vessel Permit Holders by State/Gear

State	Trap Gear	Non-Trap Gear
Maine	1293	73
New Hampshire	79	41
Massachusetts	864	356
Rhode Island	258	79
Connecticut	29	19
New York	88	76
New Jersey	121	61
Delaware	12	0
Maryland	14	3
Virginia	14	44
North Carolina	7	38
Other	6	12

The total number of lobster fishing enterprises in the region is not known—since not all jurisdictions have required permits in the past—but is estimated at 14,000 to 20,000.

Recent Lobster Landings By State (Millions of Pounds)

State	1995	1996	1997
Maine	37.2	36.1	47.0
New Hampshire	1.8	1.6	1.4
Massachusetts	15.8	15.3	14.9
Rhode Island	5.4	5.4	5.7
Connecticut	2.5	2.9	3.5
New York	6.7	9.4	10.9
New Jersey	0.6	0.6	0.9
Delaware	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
Total	70.0	71.4	84.2

Minimum legal size: 3 1/4 “ carapace length

Percentage of Female Lobster that are Sexually Mature at 3-1/4” Carapace Length

11%	Gulf of Maine
4%	Georges Bank & South
24%	South of Cape Cod/Long Island Sound

Annual Percentage of Total Fishable Female Lobster Population Removed by Fishing (1982-1993)

	Maximum	Minimum	Mean
Gulf of Maine	52	38	47
Georges Bank & South	44	26	35
South of Cape Cod/Long Island Sound	84	33	64

- * About 80% of lobsters are harvested from state waters.
- * The offshore fishery in federal waters has developed over the past ten to fifteen years, largely due to technological improvements in equipment and less competition in the offshore areas.
- * Lobsters are taken primarily by traps, with a small percentage of the harvest (out 2-3%) taken by mobile gear (trawlers and dredges).
- * In 1997, the fishery for American lobster contributed 27% of all the Northeast region’s ex vessel revenue from commercial fishing, valued at \$268 million and employed approximately 50,000 individuals.
- * There is a significant (about 20%) landing of lobsters from federal waters (3-200) miles, worth \$23.97 million in 1997

Authorities for Lobster Management

- * Lobsters and lobster fishing occur primarily in waters under the jurisdiction of states (0-3 miles from the coast), from Maine to North Carolina. States develop consistent management goals for fisheries that occur across state waters lines through the **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission** (ASMFC, or “the Commission).
- * **The Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act** (ACFCMA) allows NOAA Fisheries to work through the Commission process to develop management measures for federal waters. This is so that the stock and fishery can be managed consistently through out the area where they occur.
- * Regional fishery management councils (such as the New England Fishery Management Council or the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council) and NOAA Fisheries develop management plans for fisheries that occur primarily in federal waters through a process outlined in the **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act** (MSFCMA).